

## USAID | CSHSS Quarterly Progress Report

Period: February – March 2015

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Floride Niyuhire

April 30, 2015

The Liberia Collaborative Support for Health Activity will strengthen the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare's (MOHSW) overall capacity to consistently and effectively deliver quality health and social welfare services, through targeted health systems strengthening in priority areas.

[Health systems strengthening – USAID –Social welfare services]

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## **Liberia Collaborative Support for Health (CSH) Program**

# **Quarterly Project Report Narrative**

**(February 27 – March 31, 2015)**

**CONTRACT N°: AID-669-C-15-00001**

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## Executive Summary

This report covers the first 33 days of the Collaborative Support for Health (CSH) Program. During this period, the team focused on startup activities, specifically on establishing an office and hiring staff. On the technical front, CSH is engaging the MOHSW counterparts and counties, MOHSW partners, other USAID funded projects to inform our work planning; CSH also contributed to the validation of the MOHSW investment plan conceived in collaboration with all MOHSW's partners. While some significant challenges were encountered in the launch phase, particularly with staffing, CSH deployed MSH staff to assist with critical activities and avoid major gaps. The CSH team was able to quickly understand major developments from the past months in light of the Ebola epidemic along with current system issues, and CSH has a much clearer vision for the highest priority activities to be undertaken on this flagship program. In response to input from the COR, the CSH team has ensured a particularly rapid focus on key partners and issues in Human Resources for Health and Supply Chain.

## Progress by Program Area

Work during this initial month's activities was primarily focused on confirming or recruiting staff, establishing the office, and engaging with partners, the various working groups at the MOHSW, and other collaborators to ensure that the PY1 workplan focuses on the gaps and is not duplicative of efforts funded by other donors.

CHS technical staff met with MOHSW, the MOHSW's key partners and the different thematic groups aligned with CSH objectives. Along each of our objectives, we are gathering information pertinent to current situation in light of the Ebola crisis, what are the gains we can build upon, and the gaps that need to be addressed. The discussions are informing the workplan.

The detailed activity monitoring plan will be developed during the coming quarter, along with the PY1 workplan, which will provide a basis to report against in future quarters.

## Problems Encountered

Significant challenges were found primarily in two areas: Hiring staff and making payments in Liberia.

Several staff confirmed their commitment to join the project, only to revisit that decision and commitment just a few days later. During the year that has elapsed since the proposal was originally submitted, several staff have had significant changes in their personal situation, which have either prevented them from joining the project entirely or shifted their salary expectations. The significant changes in the donor landscape in Liberia, with extremely significant increases in the funding for health programs and consequent demand for strong staff, has changed the labor market, particularly at the upper echelons.

The bank with which MSH works in Liberia has a system that enables the team in the US to make payments directly in Liberia, from the Liberian bank account. This is extremely helpful, particularly during this startup period, when we do not yet have a full operations team on the ground.

Unfortunately, making the first few payments uncovered many different issues with the bank's system, which the accounting team is working to resolve together with the bank's point people.

## Proposed solutions

Staffing:

- Repost positions to increase the pool of candidates
- Review salary expectations and history prior to interviewing candidates, so that we do not waste time on candidates whose salaries would not be aligned with the contract budget
- Provide gap-filling from MSH and former MSH staff so that project activities can begin while the long-term staff are recruited
- As necessary, request a limited number of exceptions to the salary range included in the proposal budget

Making payments:

- Make test payments to our staff as they come on board to ensure that there are no snags in processing their regular payments (salary and reimbursements)
- As new vendors in Liberia are identified, ensure that we gather their bank information immediately to facilitate swift payment for services rendered

## Best Practices

No best practices for scale-up were identified during this quarter.

## Upcoming Events

During the next quarter there will be a few key events, mostly related to project startup:

- Launch event involving partners, collaborators, et al., to publicize CSH's activities for this first year. CSH is finalizing the date with the MOHSW.
- Joint workplanning meetings with PACS and other related activities to ensure complementarity of efforts. Several meetings will be held through the workplan preparation period (April).

International consultants and staff travel planned for the next quarter:

- Angie (Lee) Plitch, Interim Health Financing Capacity Building Advisor, 6 April – 12 May
- John Shin, Interim Director of Finance and Administration, 16 April – 12 June
- William Kiari, HRH Capacity Building Expert, Late April – 5 May
- Michele Teitelbaum, Global Technical Lead for Health Service Delivery & Project Director Supervisor, late May / early June
- TBD, Leadership and Governance
- TBD, Supply Chain Management
- TBD, Health Financing

### List of staff and consultants with dates in/out of country

Name	Role	Arrival in Liberia	Departure from Liberia	Staff / Consultant
Christopher Welch	Deputy Director, Project Management	13 March	31 March	Staff
Floride Niyuhire	Interim Chief of Party	16 March	~31 May	Staff
Peter Materu	Interim Director of Finance & Administration	24 March	11 April	Staff
Joseph Kassé	HR Partner	24 March	11 April	Staff

## **Annex A: Success Stories**

No success stories were developed this quarter, as activities focused purely on the establishment of the office, recruitment of staff, and engaging with the partners and other collaborating agencies to establish appropriate focus areas for the CSH project's activities.